



GUEST CONTRIBUTOR RABBI CHAIM BARRY

Blood in the Water

"HOW DO YOU KEEP THAT THING ON YOUR HEAD from falling off?"

That is probably the question curious gentiles ask most, regarding one's yarmulke (read: Judaism). It's the secular equivalent of being "bageled"—but with a spread of slight derision, instead of a generous topping of lox.

Keep [the mitzvos] and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear all these statutes and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." (D'varim 4:6)

Somehow, there is a disconnect between this concept and the reality many people encounter in their daily lives. Often our beliefs and performance of mitzvos have been the source of scorn and mockery in the secular world.

Yet we find in this week's Torah portion the complete opposite of this behavior, coming from none other than the very nation which had enslaved, tortured, and dehumanized us for 210 years.

Hashem gave the people favor in the Egyptians' eyes; also, the man Moshe was highly esteemed in Egypt, in the eyes of Pharaoh's servants and in the eyes of the people. (11:3)

We can explain as follows—to quote Rabbi Zev Leff:

"The Sages explain that the verse (D'varim 28:10) "All nations of the earth will see that God's Name has been called upon you and will respect and fear you," refers to the t'fillin placed on the head. The Vilna Gaon added that this means not just

the t'fillin *on* the head but the t'fillin *in* the head—i.e. the internalized intention with which the mitzvah is performed.

"The scorn of the nations of the world is not a sign of our perfection, but rather that something is lacking in our service of God, that we have failed in our role of leading a life of holiness, separate from the nations and their lifestyles. The metaphysical law that "Eisav hates Yaakov" guards us against the possibility of assimilation and spiritual self-destruction. But when we fulfill our role properly, the entire world will want to share in our service of God."

When we as Jews internalize our service of Hashem, and serve Hashem with pride and conviction, the nations of the world sense the truth in us and the connection between us and the Creator. This leads to greater *k'vod Shamayim*, honor for Hashem.

However, when we are skittish and act with hesitation and apology, the secular world smells blood in the water; it will scorn and shame Hashem's dictates, G-d forbid.

May we all merit to serve and internalize our cherished gift of Torah and mitzvos.

A HALACHA FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

ONCE THE LOCUSTS CAME, THE EGYPTIANS REJOICED AND SAID, "LET'S GATHER THEM AND FILL OUR BARRELS WITH THEM." HASHEM SAID, "WICKED PEOPLE—ARE YOU GOING TO REJOICE IN THE PLAGUE THAT I HAVE BROUGHT AGAINST YOU?" IMMEDIATELY, G-D BROUGHT A WESTERN WIND... AND NONE WERE LEFT. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT NONE WERE LEFT? EVEN THOSE THAT HAD BEEN PICKLED WITH SALT, AND SITTING IN POTS AND BARRELS, WERE BLOWN AWAY... (MIDRASH RABBAH)

What's fascinating is that not only did the Egyptians eat grasshoppers back then, but a variety of locusts are permissible under the laws of Kashrus—and are eaten by some Jews, even today.

Even though almost all flying insects are forbidden, the Rabbis of the Talmud (Chullin 59a) identified four kosher species of locust, with four criteria, based on the verses in Parashas Shemini (Vayikra 11:21–22). A kosher locust has

- 1) four walking legs,
- 2) two jumping legs, and

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TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On 4 Sh'vat, 5584 (1824), a meeting was held at the home of Morris Moses, and Cincinnati's first Jewish congregation was established. Jews had held Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services since 1819, but now the community numbered twenty people, and the time was right. The meeting was attended by ten community members. The assembled made a commitment "to form ourselves into a congregation for the purpose of glorifying our G-d, and observing the fundamental principles of our faith, as developed in the laws of Moses." In 1830, the congregation formally took the name K'hal Kodesh Benai Israel. In 1836, after years of effort, the congregation completed its own synagogue building. In 1855, the congregation moved away from its original principles, becoming Reform. It is now known as Rockdale Temple.

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Rabbi & Mrs. Moshe Tzvi Crystal

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A HALACHA FROM THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

- 3) wings that cover the greater part of the body.
- 4) Besides having these signs, the locust in question must be called a *chagav* (a locust).

There must also be a continuous tradition affirming that it's kosher. (Y.D. 85)

Grasshoppers are *pareve* (neutral—neither meat nor dairy). They don't require *sh'chita* (ritual slaughter) (Y.D. 85:2), but they may not be eaten alive. (*Shach*, 3)

A clear tradition of eating locusts was accepted by all factions of Yemenite Jewry, as well as many Moroccan and Tunisian Jews, as recorded by many prominent Yemenite authorities in the seventeenth century. In Yemen, the most common were the desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*) and the Egyptian locust (*Anacridium aegyptium*). According to their tradition, a kosher locust is identified by a mark resembling the Hebrew letter *ches* on the underside of the thorax.

In terms of preparation, locusts were either thrown into a pot of boiling salt water or roasted in an oven. Based on the Midrash above, they could be pickled, as well! They were seen by refined people as a delicacy. (Some describe locusts as having a buttery and nutty taste.) "When a swarm of locusts took over their country and wreaked havoc by consuming the grain, [the people] would nonetheless take momentary pleasure in it by filling sacks [with locusts] and loading [them] onto their donkeys..." (*Halichot Teiman* 218)

However, the Ashkenazic community refrains from eating locusts. This is based on the opinions of many early authorities (including Rashi), who feel that that we are no longer familiar with the names or identities of kosher locusts; a decision was made to ban all grasshoppers in fear of possibly eating one of the forbidden species, many of which look nearly identical to the permitted ones. (Taz Y.D. 85:1) Some suggest that the tradition was bound to be forgotten in Europe, since these particular locusts cannot survive in such a cold climate. 🕊



WINTER BREAK The Kollel will be on recess from Monday afternoon, January 22 till Monday morning, January 29.

a bar mitzvah and a siyum—
mazal tov, Shua Bernstein!



GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

AZI WAS A KID IN TROUBLE. HE'D BEEN ON A downward slope for some time, but now he was involved with a gang that stole and vandalized cars.

In the middle of a theft one night, a large man spotted them and raised the alarm. All the other members of the group ran away, while Azi was stuck in the car and unable to escape. The man took hold of Azi's arm and dragged him up to the house of Benny Azulai, the owner of the car.

Azi was totally ashamed. Once he was sure that his car was safe, Benny let him go.

In desperation, Azi's parents tried to separate him from the gang by sending him to a summer camp. The camp experience was beneficial for Azi, and he returned home more stable.

Soon afterward, Azi was dealt a crushing blow with the passing of his mother. He was unable to cope, and he took to aimlessly wandering the streets.

One day he met a fellow camper.

"Hey Azi, I'm on my way to an NCSY barbecue. Would you like to come?"

"What's NCSY?"

"Don't worry about it, just come with me."

Azi followed along to someone's backyard. He was surveying the scene, when he heard, "What are you doing at my house?"

He looked over and saw that he had just

walked into Benny Azulai's backyard!

"I'll leave! I didn't realize this was your house." said Azi quickly, as he turned to go.

"You don't need to," said Benny. "Stay and eat a little."

Benny did not stop there. He sat across from Azi and engaged him in conversation. By the end of the barbecue, Azi was invited for a Shabbos meal—which led to another, and another. Eventually, through Benny's efforts, Azi went to yeshiva, and he now leads a productive, Jewish life. 🕊

A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Which non-kohein ate from the Lechem haPanim (Showbread)?

The answer will appear in two weeks.

PREVIOUS RIDDLE:

Q A person damages two oxen, which are not his, in the exact same way. He's liable for the damage to one, but not for the other. How is this possible?

A One ox is privately owned. The other has been consecrated to the Temple. A person is only liable for damage done to a privately owned animal. (Talmud, Bava Kama 6b) 🕊